



Belfast Bay
Watershed
Coalition

WATERSHED NEWS

BBWC Volunteers Monitor Water Quality in Belfast Bay



For three years, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition (BBWC) volunteers, trained by BBWC board member John Tipping, have been monitoring the water quality in Belfast Bay. Tipping is Director of Lotic, Inc., a professional lab located in Belfast, that tests effluent from sewage treatment plants around New England and conducts other water-related projects, such as eel grass mapping and stream quality studies.

Tipping trained the volunteers to act as water quality monitors sampling the bay at a day's high and low tide. Their goal is to establish a baseline and ongoing understanding of the Bay's water quality, based on values of dissolved oxygen, conductivity, pH, temperature, and salinity over time. Monitors use a professional test kit with four different probes that are connected to a handheld digital meter, and a salinity refractometer. The

testing is done twice weekly at the Belfast City Dock and the mouth of the Little River. If the proposed salmon farm in Belfast is permitted by both BEP and Maine DEP, BBWC will also be monitoring the data available on the public record.

Thanks to Leo Shea for leading the Water Quality Team for three years, organizing the volunteers and keeping track of the findings, and to team members Barbara Bell, Sally Bennett, Margot Carpenter, Susan Connolly, Caryn Converse, Susan Dexter, and Rick Fitzsimmons. Many thanks to John Tipping for sharing his equipment, which we otherwise would not be able to afford, and his great expertise.

Anyone interested in becoming part of the BBWC Water Quality Team or participating in other ways should contact the BBWC website at the email address below.

www.belfastbaywatershed.org

Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, PO Box 152, Belfast, Maine 04915
info@belfastbaywatershed.org

What Do Fish, the Bicentennial, and Maine Have in Common?

By Cloe Chunn



Alewives photographed by John Burrows

As we celebrate the bicentennial of the State of Maine, this is a good time to remember how important our abundant and precious natural resources have been to our history and the people in our state. Before Maine became a state in 1820, abundant fisheries fed Indigenous tribes, settlers, and wildlife in the Penobscot watershed. By many published accounts, the Penobscot watershed flourished with returning sea-run fish that fed and supported wildlife and early people. In those times, shad, herring, salmon, sturgeon, and alewives were plentiful. Names like Salmon Stream, Shad Rips, and Place of Eel Weirs remind us of the river's richness.

However, while native peoples understood the importance of respecting and sustaining nature's gifts, some later settlers did not. In the 1800s, sea-run fish species were shut out of their spawning tributaries by log, then plank, then eight stone dams, until fish were effectively barred from the watershed. Various industries polluted the river and bay, delivering another big blow to fish trying to live and reproduce.

Thankfully, we now better understand the value of our natural resources and our role as their steward. At the turn of the 21st century, the Penobscot Indian Nation, American Rivers, Atlantic Salmon Federation, Maine Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, and Trout Unlimited worked together to remove dams and restore the Penobscot, Maine's largest river. Thanks to their herculean efforts, two dams were removed in 2012 and 2013, and a white-water fish bypass constructed in 2015. It was a huge undertaking, and it has yielded results of rebounding populations of shad, herring, alewives, and, more slowly, Atlantic salmon.

Today the Penobscot is a lovely, mostly free-flowing river that flows 107 miles from the confluence of the East and West Branches in Medway to the sea at Bucksport. It is so clean that, in 2019, it was upgraded from Class B to Class A status. *(continued on page 3)*

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This remarkable rejuvenation happened because many different people from many different interest groups banded together for a common purpose. We the People, together, forged a course for sea-run fish freedom and economic growth, to the benefit of the natural world and for the health and enjoyment of those of us living in it.

This is how we who live in Maine have acted, and CAN act. There is more work to do. Let's keep doing what is right for our natural systems, our communities, our diverse peoples, our families, and ourselves.

Happy Birthday, Maine!

Community Effort Provides Food & Fun to Families



Miss Jenni leads a learning circle.



Jenni and her daughter, Avi, distribute oak seedling "friends" to children.

This summer, the Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition teamed up with Waldo Community Action Partners and Community Food for Children to provide free meals while school was closed. Breakfasts and lunches were provided for pick-up and at no cost to all children 18 years and under on Mondays and Thursdays.

While parents picked up food, their children picked up natural literacy. Jenni Judkins, BBWC's Natural Literacy Educator, organized weekly natural literacy educational activities at food depot locations. Children were educated and entertained at 5 mobile home parks, 3 subsidized apartment complexes and a town library.

Adhering to Coronavirus prevention principles, children sat in widely spaced circles for nature songs and games. The topics Jenni taught included trees, soil, water cycle, water resources and animal habitat and behavior. All groups were left with small weekly "journals" about a species-of-the-week, with pages to color, and guided observations. Not all of the students knew "Miss Jenni" from school, but those who did were so enthusiastic that the rest of the children and parents were encouraged to join in. BBWC is now making plans to continue outdoor natural literacy education in the coming school year. *(continued on page 6)*

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Fall BBWC/Library On-line Programs

Thursday, Sept. 17, 6:30 pm - Calling Upon Tree Medicine

From forest bathing to pine needle tea, from birch twig baths to sitting with one's back against a mighty oak, trees offer many forms of healing. Community/Intuitive Herbalist Suzanne Stone will discuss the gifts they offer and how to harvest them thoughtfully and ethically. She will share tree medicine recipes and thoughts on how we can honor the trees who give us so much.

Suzanne has grown and learned from trees and other plants in the fields, forests, her own gardens, and as Head Gardener/Educator at the New Day School, Portland, Oregon. She has studied at the Elderberry School of Botanical Medicine in Portland, Oregon, with Gail Faith Edwards of Blessed Maine Farm, and Sajah Popham of the School of Evolutionary Herbalism. Under the name of Moon of Hyldemoer Herbs, she grows and creates with herbs, and teaches herbal medicine and tree knowledge courses to adults and children. She currently resides on the coast in Wabanaki Maine. She can be reached at www.moonofhyldemoer.com



Thursday, Oct. 15, 6:30 pm - A Solo Canoe Trip on the Penobscot River: Reflections on Philosophy and The Environment

Alejandro C. Strong, Registered Maine Guide and philosophy professor, recounts a recent canoe trip he took in Maine's North Woods. Alejandro mixes stories from his recent trip, memories from 20 years of leading canoe trips, and philosophical reflections on nature and our place in it.

Alejandro is the founder of Apeiron Expeditions, and teaches philosophy at Husson University. He is interested in helping people explore the relationship between natural environments and human culture.

Thursday, Nov. 19, 6:30 pm - Winter Bird Count Warm Up: Preparing for the Annual Christmas Bird Count"

If you have ever wondered what a Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is all about, look no further. Seth Benz, our local North Penobscot Bay CBC coordinator, will cover the basics of the Christmas Bird Count, including where, when, and how to get involved. Do you have backyard bird feeders? You can participate. Do you love hiking trails or driving back roads in winter? This count could be for you. Are you simply curious to learn more about the birds that share this small part of the planet with us? This presentation is for you. Join us!

Seth Benz is the director of bird ecology at Schoodic Institute in Acadia National Park. He has lived on a seabird island, counted hawks from a mountain top, caught peregrine falcons on an east coast barrier island, and introduced thousands of people to the pleasures of birds and birding.



To register for a Zoom program:

Go to the belfastlibrary.org/events and find the date of the program. You will find the link to register. You will be notified by an email with a link to the program.

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Self-Guided Fall/Winter Adventures

Though group adventures are still on hold, our beautiful environment is still open for exploration.

Below are some adventures you can have on your own.

September is still a good paddling month:

There are 2 tidal paddles that are scenic and easily done if you use the tide to help you. Tide tables can be found at <https://www.usharbors.com/harbor/maine/belfast-me/tides/?tide=2020-09#monthly-tide-chart>:

- ◆ Paddle #1: Paddle the Passagassawakeag from the Belfast Boathouse upriver as far as you can go to Head of Tide. When the tide turns, paddle with it back down to the Boathouse. If you want to add a lobster dinner, detour across the harbor to Young's Lobster Pound, or dine at the Nautilus or the Front Street Pub on the Belfast waterfront. All have outdoor dining. Or you can buy a lobster or crab roll at the Must Be Nice food truck and find your own seat on the waterfront.
- ◆ Paddle #2: Paddle the South Branch of the Marsh River as far upstream as the tide takes you, then paddle it back down on the falling tide. Use the Frankfort Boat Launch on Rt. 1A. If you want to dine afterwards, you can drive a few miles to Bucksport and try the popular new Friar's Brewhouse, Warren's Waterfront Restaurant, or MacLeod's.

September is also a good month for hiking:

You can pick a section of the Hills to Sea Trail, which crosses Waldo County from Unity to Belfast. To download a map, go to www.waldotrails.org

Other September hikes include Coastal Mountains Land Trust's McLellan-Poor Preserve and Newman Preserve, both in Northport. For CMLT hikes, go to www.coastalmountains.org.

October is fall foliage hiking time:

- ◆ The Hills to Sea Trail has enough sections to keep you busy in all seasons. Note that some sections are closed to keep hikers away from hunters. www.waldotrails.org
- ◆ Georges River Land Trust at www.georgesriver.org has some excellent fall foliage hikes. Try the Ridge to River Trail, or the shorter Gibson Preserve or Canal Tow Path trails.
- ◆ Coastal Mountain Land Trust's Penobscot Shore preserve has a loop trail down to the river and back, located in Prospect. www.coastalmountains.org

November brings deer hunting season:

Two places where hunting is not permitted are Moose Point State Park in Searsport and the Belfast Rail Trail. Another good place is to walk the Belfast beach between mid and low tide from City Park to the Harbor Walk, about a mile. Or double it round trip. If you time it right, you can watch a beautiful sunrise.

Of course, you can hike on Sunday, when hunting is not allowed, but wear orange anyway. The Little River Community Trail and various preserves should be free of hunters.

December can be hard to predict:

Are we skiing, snowshoeing, or hiking? Picks for December include Coastal Mountains Land Trust hikes at Hawk-Fry and Rocky Knolls trails, both in Swanville. It is now possible to ski or walk from Hawk-Fry on Oak Hill Road to Bessey Preserve on Swan Lake Avenue. Round trip is 3-4 miles.

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Summer Literacy, continued from page 3

The success of this project highlights the importance of businesses, organizations and agencies working together to address our community’s needs during this difficult time. The Education team consisted of the BBWC, the Belfast Garden Club, the Restorative Justice Project and Literacy Volunteers. The Waldo County Technical Center became the base for the FOOD distribution program and Midcoast Transportation provided food delivery to nine sites in Belfast, Searsport, Swanville and Stockton Springs. The Federal Summer Food Service Program provided funding to cover the cost of food provided, as well as packaging/delivery materials.



Passagassawakeag River in the Fall

Subscribe on-line to this newsletter and monthly reminders of our activities. Subscribe at www.belfastbaywatershed.org or send an email to info@belfastbaywatershed.org

Please visit our website Calendar for updates on outings and programs that did not make it into this newsletter.

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● *Mission: The Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition works to support conservation and*
● *stewardship of natural, scenic and public access resources of the Belfast Bay water-*
● *shed through research, community building and education.*
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BBWC wishes to thank all our individual members and business members. We couldn’t do it without you:

- Belfast Community TV
- Belfast Garden Club
- Belfast Veterinary Hospital
- Coyote Moon
- Consumers Fuel

- Darby’s Restaurant
- Downeast Outing Club
- Front Street Shipyard
- Let Them Eat Cake
- Northport Yacht Club

- Resources for Organizing and Social Change
- Searsport Shores Ocean Campground
- Waldo County Soil and Water
- Wilderness & Conservation Fund

BWCC Board of Directors

- Ernie Cooper, President
- Karin Wittmann, Vice President
- Debbie Murphy, Secretary
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- David Bond
- Cloe Chunn
- Pat Gladding
- Barney Lutsk
- Tom King
- Marianne Randall
- John Tipping

Staff

- Jenni Judkins, Natural Literacy Educator
- George Frangoulis, Publicity and Website

New Members Invited!

Jump on board and help expand and strengthen our work in the community and watershed. Visit our website, call a board member or email us at info@belfastbaywatershed.org.

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